

Wednesday, February 26
Humility Before God
Luke 18:9-14

I have been both people in Jesus's parable. The rare times that I think I have done a particularly good job of living up to God's commandments, I am the Pharisee. More often, I am the tax collector. I wrestle with all of my failings – times I have fallen short of God's calling and Jesus's example. I am uncomfortably aware of my sin. I have no right on my own to go to God to ask for His help, His guidance, His protection, or His favor. David points out, though, that God's greatest desire is for confession and a heart that is broken and contrite (Psalm 51).

The Lord has been softening my heart and my spirit toward Him over the last few months, preparing me for this season of Lent. He has been calling me into a more intimate relationship with Him. I have a deep longing for the rest, renewal, and revival that I know God alone can give me. I want to be open to His leading. I know that there is room for growth and renewed joy and power in my spiritual life. Lent gives me an opportunity to open myself up to the Holy Spirit's lead. It is a sacred time of self-denial that leads to introspection and reflection on how I am faring in this marathon called Christian discipleship.

How do we go about the process of self-denial? Some choose to sacrifice an indulgent pleasure: sweets, sodas, coffee, eating out; others choose to give up an unnecessary drain on their time and energy: talk radio, social media, or television; and still others choose to sacrifice time by adding spiritual disciplines like Bible reading, quiet times, and family devotions. Whatever the sacrificial gift, the purpose is to set aside these forty days for the Lord – to deny the world's influence over us in favor of God's influence. My first act of self-denial this year is submitting the walls guarding my heart as a burnt offering to the Lord believing He can transform the remaining ashes into His glory.

Do you want something fresh and new in your relationship with the Lord? If so, join me: let's deny ourselves over the next forty days. Let's dedicate this time to the Lord and acknowledge that we are not where we want to be. Then let's ask Him to bless us with more intimacy and that which this world cannot offer: the power to live the abundant life of joy He offers!

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Luke 18:9-14 New International Version (NIV)

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."